

3\$8 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S HISTORY

Portland.¹ To Waldeck, who urged that to act on the defensive in Ireland, and to carry out the projected descent on France, was the best strategic combination,² William explained that his present plan was the only feasible one.

The constitution of this kingdom and of the people is such that it is an absolute necessity that I govern myself at present according to their humour, and that I attempt to put an end to this business, before I can dream of another. I assure you that if I was not entirely convinced that unless I go to Ireland nothing beneficial will be done there, I should never have taken such a resolution. I recognise all its inconveniences and difficulties, which are not few. I hope by the grace of God to surmount them, and that He will assist me with His all-powerful hand as he has done up till now, in order that by finishing this business happily and promptly I can be more useful to all the Allies and act more vigorously against the common enemy.³

It has been necessary to go into detail in order to show exactly what the facts are which refute Burnet's story and how they could be so perverted as to make the story seem plausible. There are two facts which could be misunderstood or perverted so as to create the impression embodied in the legend. In the first place, about the beginning of December 1689 William created a great deal of excitement in political circles when he changed his plans and decided

to go to Ireland in person as soon as possible. But the plan he abandoned was not one to return permanently to Holland, but to leave England in order to take command of a proposed expedition to France. In the second place, the words which William used in speaking about the proposed arrangement for the government of England during his

¹ Undated. Ranke, iv. 581.

² Miiller, ii. 206.

³ Ibid. p. 210.